

'Baby Buddy' app to support expectant and new parents seeks user feedback

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buddy avatars

The child health and wellbeing charity Best Beginnings is inviting professionals and parents to use and give feedback on a free mobile phone app, the first version of which aims to support young mothers through pregnancy to when the baby is six months old.

The [app](#) comprises around 40 short films, mostly from Best Beginnings's From Bump to Breastfeeding and Small Wonders DVDs, which encourage young parents, and especially mothers, to improve their health choices and well-being by increasing knowledge, improving confidence and enhancing bonding and attachment.

The app has been endorsed by numerous professional organisations including the Royal College of Midwives and the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists.

Dr Damian Roland, Honorary Senior Lecturer at the University of Leicester's Department of Health Sciences, who lent his expertise in reviewing the material used in its production and will be assessing its impact, says: "It is important that babies receive the best possible start in life. The app will allow more parents to carefully manage the transition to parenthood and take it one step at a time. I am fully supportive of Baby Buddy and hope it achieves its aims."

Dr Roland has already won awards for his work on the Paediatric Observation Priority Score (POPS), an innovative app that enables health professionals to assess, prioritise and treat acutely ill children. He is a member of the SAPPHIRE group (Social Science APPLIED to Healthcare Improvement REsearch), which conducts research into patient safety and quality of care in the NHS.

While Baby Buddy has been designed for parents to use on their own, it can also be used in appointments with healthcare professionals, thus reinforcing the importance of accessing health services.

Best Beginnings is looking for feedback from both groups ahead of the official launch in mid-November. Users can give 'in-app' feedback and any comments or suggestions for improvement or additional content e.g. new FAQs for the 'Ask me' function, can also be emailed to hpapps@bestbeginnings.org.uk. Midwives in particular are encouraged to download and use the app to understand its functionality and content, so that they can recommend it as appropriate to the families they support.

Professionals are asked to select the healthcare professional option when registering as a user of the app, so the charity can separate out feedback from parents and [professionals](#).

Users may wish to rate it and write a review of it on Google Play or iTunes App Store. "The more reviews there are for parents-to-be and new parents looking for help, the easier it is to decide if it's worth downloading, so this would be appreciated," says Dr Roland.

The app has been made possible thanks to funding from the Big Lottery Fund, the Tedworth Charitable Trust and the Guys and St Thomas' Charity alongside app developers Despark. Best Beginnings, which has produced a set of free posters and leaflets for display in hospitals, clinics and surgeries to raise awareness about the app, is now making 100-plus new films which will be included in the app by Spring 2015 and, with additional funding, plans to make a dads' version and take the content up to the third birthday.

More information: Version 1.0 can be installed now on smartphones using the following links:

Android phone: play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.bestbeginnings.babybuddy

iPhone: itunes.apple.com/gb/app/baby-buddy/id903080388?mt=8

or via the Best Beginnings website:

www.bestbeginnings.org.uk/babybuddy-involved

Provided by University of Leicester

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